First Congregational
United Church of Christ

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Former Chappell Elementary School
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www.ypsiucc.org

An open and affirming community committed to peace and justice

Animal Blessing Ceremony

September 25, 2022
1:00 PM

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, You are welcome here!

Rev. Liz Larrivee, Pastor & Spiritual Director
Tiffanie Waldron, Music Director
Joshua Catania, Accompanist
Jenn Zibbell, MID Ministry Intern

Gathering and Welcome

If you have an animal with you, please keep them close to you.

Greetings to all who have gathered! Today we specifically recognize ALL creatures great and small: Those who sit in our presence, and those out in the world; those who prosper, those who suffer, those who have passed. With all our hearts we lift up all animals and ask God's blessing on each and every one as an essential part of God's creation, who are loved and cared for by God. Please join me as we center ourselves in this space with a responsive call to worship:

Call to Worship: *The Inclusive Bible*. Psalm 148:1-5, 7-13

Leader: Alleluia! Praise God from the heavens; praise God in the heights!
All: Praise God, all you angels; praise God all you hosts!
Leader: Praise God, sun and moon; praise God, all you shining stars!
All: Praise God, you highest heavens; and you waters above the heavens!
Leader: Let them praise God's name, by whose command they were created.
All: Praise God from the earth, you sea creatures and ocean depths,
Leader: lightning and hail, snow and mist, and storm winds that fulfill God's word,
All: mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars,
Leader: wild animals and all cattle, small animals and flying birds,
All: Rulers of the earth, leaders of all nations, all the judges in the world,
Leader: young people, old people and children –
All: let them all praise God's name, whose name alone is exalted! Amen!

Bible Reading: *The Inclusive Bible*. Genesis 1:20-25

"God then said, "Waters: swarm with an abundance of living beings! Birds: fly above the earth in the open expanse of the sky!" And so it was: God created great sea monsters and all sorts of swimming creatures with which the waters are filled, and all kinds of birds. God saw that this was good and blessed them, saying, "Bear fruit, increase your numbers, and fill the waters of the seas! Birds, abound on the earth!"

Evening came, and morning followed – the fifth day.

God then said, "Earth: bring forth all kinds of living soul – cattle, things that crawl, and wild animals of all kinds!" So it was: God made all kinds of wild animals, and cattle, and everything that crawls on the ground, and God saw that this was good."

Hymn: "All Things Bright and Beautiful"

All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful, our God made them all.

Each little flow'r that opens, each little bird that sings,
God made their glowing colors, God made their tiny wings.

All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful, our God made them all.

God gave us eyes to see them, and lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty, who has made all things well.

All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful, our God made them all.

Prayer for Animals Suffering: Adapted from *Animal Rites: Liturgies of Animal Care* by Andrew Lindzey.

Creator of all,
As you blessed the living creatures at the beginning of the world,
We pray that you will now bless, preserve, and heal
These suffering creatures and protect them from all cruelty:
We ask this prayer through the One who showed mercy
And whose life was a blessing to others.
Amen.

Prayer for Animals Passed: Adapted from *Animal Rites: Liturgies of Animal Care* by Andrew Lindzey.

Dear God,
You have enlivened all the creatures of the earth with your spirit;
Nothing dies but is remembered by you
And nothing lives without your grace;
Bless all the innocent creatures
And by your same Spirit grant them eternal life in your presence.
Amen.

Hymn: "O God, Your Creatures Fill the Earth"
*To the tune of "I Sing the Mighty Power of God"

O God, your creatures fill the earth with wonder and delight,
And every living thing has worth and beauty in your sight.
So playful dolphins dance and swim; Your sheep bow down and graze.
Your songbirds share a morning hymn To offer you their praise.

You made the pets we welcome in — They're wondrous blessings, too.
With paws and whiskers, wings and fins, They offer praise to you.
O Lord, you call us to embrace These creatures in our care.
May we show kindness, love and grace To all pets everywhere.

You made the creatures on each farm; You know the things they need.
May they grow healthy, safe from harm, And safe from human greed.
Just as a shepherd loves the sheep, You know their joy, their pain.
Lord, bless the animals we keep; May all farms be humane.

Your creatures live in every land; They fill the sky and sea.
O Lord, you give us your command To love them tenderly.

We're called to have dominion here — To care for them always.

By loving creatures you hold dear, We offer you our praise.

Prayer for Companion Animals: Adapted from *Animal Rites: Liturgies of Animal Care* by Andrew Lindzey.

Generous God,
Whose own self-giving is reflected in the love and devotion of these animal companions;
Bless them with your Spirit, and make us mindful of the great responsibility
We bear for all creatures dependent upon us for their welfare;
Help us to use our power over them for their own benefit
And never selfishly for our own gain.
Amen.

Blessing of the Animals:

*This is the time for individual blessings of the animals. Please bring your pet, picture, or item forward to receive their blessing. Once your animal has been blessed, please return to your seat.

Bible Reading: *The Inclusive Bible*. Psalm 104:10-24, 31

You set springs gushing in ravines, running down between the mountains,
supplying water for wild animals and attracting the thirsty wild donkeys;
the birds of the air make their nests by these waters and sing among the branches.

From your palace you water the highlands until the ground is sated by the fruit of your work;
You make fresh grass grow for cattle and plants for us to cultivate
To get food from the soil – wine to cheer our hearts;
oil to make our faces shine, and bread to sustain our life.

The trees of God drink their fill – Those cedars of Lebanon, where birds build their nests
And, on the highest branches, The stork makes its home.
For wild goats there are high mountains, and in the crags the rock badgers hide.

You made the moon to tell the seasons, And the sun knows when to set:
You bring darkness on, night falls, And all the forest animals come out –
Savage lions roaring for their prey, Claiming their food from God.
The sun rises, they retire, Going back to lie down in their lairs,
And people go out to work, To labor again until evening.

God, what variety you have created, Arranging everything so wisely!
The earth is filled with your creativity!
Glory forever to God! May you find joy in your creation!

Hymn: “May God Bless all of the Creatures”

*To the Tune of “Jesus Loves the Little Children”

May God bless all of the creatures

All God’s creatures great and small

They are loved and they bring light

They are precious in God's sight

May God bless all of the creatures of the world

Prayer for Caretakers: Adapted from *Animal Rites: Liturgies of Animal Care* by Andrew Lindzey.

Blessed before you, O God, are those who struggle for peace and justice
Not only for human beings, but for all creatures;
Strengthen their endeavors by the power of your Holy Spirit,
And may the blessings of God Almighty,
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, be upon them.
Amen.

Benediction: Adapted from http://www.webofcreation.org/SeasonofCreation/animalblessing.html

Leader: May the Spirit of God, who is above all and in all and through all, fill you with the knowledge of God's presence in Earth. Go in peace! Serving God and loving all creatures!
All: We go in peace! Serving God and loving our animal kin.

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